

The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design

Quartz is a very common mineral in the Earth's crust. The high purity quartz found in Norway, with some of the largest deposits near Oslo, is becoming one of today's key strategic raw materials. High purity quartz, like art, requires a high level process of refinement. Inspired by one of Norway's greatest natural mineral resource, the goal of the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design is to establish it as place of international significance. The Museum will become a dynamic new complex with a vibrant national research and excellence center for visual arts.

The process of designing a new museum begins with breaking free of the constraints of the typical white box used in contemporary museums. This process of refining the arrangement of spaces in a contemporary museum is similar to the refinement of raw quartz found in the earth. The first steps of processing the mineral physically include crushing, flotation, and separation techniques. The white box museum is pulled apart, analyzed and reconstructed into a more performance and freedom based design. Once the dissection and flotation of the individual components are given individual identify, they are reorganized around a central hub, similar to a wheel of a bicycle. Distinct gallery types are molded into shape with specific proportions, lighting, and circulation requirements.

The resulting quartz-like shape is a series of cantilevered boxes hinged together with a vertical communication and support hub. The intersecting boxes housing the exhibit areas offer a generous flexible circulation sequence as well as a diversity of sizes, heights, and light. The hinge areas allow for clear orientation of spaces and offer places of contemplation and observation with optimal views of the city and water. This organizational strategy creates a high performing collection of program spaces and galleries with greater diversity, flexibility and freedom for the expression of the arts.

During the "midnight light" months, the quartz-like object with its highly polished perforated titanium skin reflects the interplay of different activities of the urban landscape and the dynamic role the new Museum will play in the heart of the city. The transparency of the skin displays the movement of people and colors within the façade bringing the building to life during the long winter months of the "polar nights"